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## Paying for Talent

IT is good that there should be a growing revolt in New Zealand against our national reluctance to pay for exceptional talent; though we are in that respect in the same position as most countries as young as we are, and as thinly populated. It is of course time that we had a different story to tell, but we must not begin talking as if older countries invariably honour their gifted sons and shower rewards on them. One New Zealand exile at present in Wellington suggested the other day that if our scientific workers banded themselves together in a union they would get better treatment. Perhaps they would; but no one who has attended recent meetings of university professors and lecturers will think of them as academic innocents who don't know how to look after themselves. It is quite right that they should look after themselves, but not exactly desirable that looking after themselves should ever be, or ever be supposed to be, more important to them than looking after knowledge and truth. There is a point beyond which we should not go in considering the financial rewards appropriate for scholarship and scientific research. If a scholar is liberally enough paid to be able to pursue his work without financial anxiety there is not much need to worry about him: he has joys that the rest of us can never have. If he is kept below that level of mental freedom the situation is bad wherever it exists, and no one should attempt to justify it; but it is not in itself worse that a scientific worker should have financial worries than that a farmer should, or a nurse, or the mother of a family. In any case we have some interesting scientific results to show in spite of our treatment of our scientific workers. We have not made an atomic bomb, but we have shown the world how to keep babies alive, produced a new sheep and a new strain of wheat, and are now hot on the trail of auto-sexing fowls. If tears must still be shed over our gifted sons, they need not be big or bitter tears, or kept flowing too freely.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

## APPEALS TO FARMERS

Sir,—Why have the farmers been singled out to be the unwilling victims of the latest radio propaganda campaign? Why suggest by implication that farmers are a group of easy-going folk who need continual stimulation if they are to do any work? Most cow farmers whom I know object to being urged to work, however good the cause, by smooth-tongued announcers who probably don't know which end of a cow produces the milk. On this farm the day begins at 5.0 a.m. and ends at 7.0 p.m. with one-and-a-half hours off for meals in between. Why choose the busy hay-making season to urge yet more effort? Why not attend to the backslidings of some of the 40-hour week people who think they are over-worked if they actually push a pen for more than 35 hours? Farmers know when and how to make hay. They have been doing it for years—and honeyed advice from the city fastness of 2YA is not only unnecessary but often borders on presumption, in spite of the good intentions behind all this radio "flap."

One other matter—the morning weather forecast, repeated now at 9.0 a.m. for the benefit of "farmers, yachtsmen, etc." O.K. perhaps for yachtsmen, but most dairy farmers are in the dairy at 7.0 a.m. and have left the house after breakfast at 9.0 a.m.—a fact that should be known to the programme arrangers. Eight o'clock is the logical time for a farmers' forecast, especially when such forecasts are of vital importance in making hay. The service is appreciated, but the thing is all wrong.

HAYSEED (Hamilton)

## WORLD HOPES

Sir,—Professor Wood's cogent article on developments during the last century ends with the suggestion that "the magnificent Thomist reconciliation of reason with faith" may provide the way out of our world troubles. The nations are leaning on a broken reed in looking to the United Nations as an instrument for securing enduring world peace. It is just another form of what Professor Wood describes as "faith in constitutions as a panacea; one expression of 18th Century confidence in the capacity of the unaided intellect to solve the problems of human society."

Thomas Aquinas taught that we had two sources of knowledge, divine revelation (supernatural) and human intellect (natural) and that all our knowledge begins with the senses. It seems to me that one of the major difficulties consequent upon accepting this view is that the word "divine" has in our language the definite meaning of pertaining to a deity, inferring a person, called God. And immediately we begin to think of a personal Deity, we become unconsciously embroiled and befogged with our own personalities and our ideas of personal responsibility, which leads to the allocation of responsibility for good and evil to that personality we call God. Therefrom flows a variety of religions and their various influences on human life and action.

If we could bring ourselves to accept the idea of an impersonal source of supernatural inspiration that it is beyond our capacity to define, which operates in some way beyond our comprehension, we might get rid of sectarianism and all its potentialities

for oblique spiritual vision and unceasing rivalry and strife, and open the way for a more fruitful co-operation of the main elements of the Thomist philosophy. After all, we come from we don't know where, and we go to we don't know where; and yet we profess through our various religions, to be positive about what we must believe and do here in order to thrive, or be all right in that unknown to which we all must pass. The liberation of the human spirit must precede the political liberation of the nations.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

## READING, FILM, AND RADIO TASTES

Sir,—I was most interested in Mr. Fairburn's review of "Reading, Film, and Radio Tastes of High School Boys and Girls," by W. J. Scott. While I have not as yet read the book itself, may I suggest that the real reason for the cultural desert in which so many millions of English-speaking peoples live to-day, is that most of us are children of the Industrial Revolution? Prior to the Nineteenth Century, while the population of the Anglo-Saxon world was for so long relatively static, men inherited a culture of great antiquity and their lives held sufficient meaning to create good taste. The increase of population in Great Britain during the past 100 years—15 million to 50 million—means that about 35 million Englishmen to-day have no background save three or four generations of squalor and mechanical slavery. It is natural that they lag sadly behind the cultural standards of (say) their Elizabethan counter-type, of whom a common sailor was able to clothe his thoughts in the then-universal poetry and write to Her Majesty that: "The pinions of a man's life are trimmed with the plumage of death."

The sins of our forefathers are now being visited upon us, and our expiation will be troublesome. Yet surely much can be done by a moderate control. Without any absolute ban upon such mental narcotics as strips, digests, and sensationalist literature, surely they can become less commonly and widely distributed, and the public thus weaned from their use; many of them originate in America, and cost us dollars as well as intelligent citizens. With less of these, and more reprints of merit, the tide will turn as people unconsciously educate themselves.

In England at the present time, by virtue of necessity, much that is trivial and pernicious in leisure is being done away with. Englishmen, perforce, see more of their own films (sometimes precious, but usually intelligent), read reprints of proven worth (the paper shortage forbids less-certain publications), and in general are given little opportunity for cultural decadence.

R. A. DENNANT (Auckland).

## ARTS YEAR BOOK

Sir,—It is disheartening that *The Listener* should so far depart from the standard which it has taught its readers to expect as to give an important publication like the *Arts Year Book* to a reviewer who by her own admission is not equipped to write seriously about painting.

The *Arts Year Book* is important because it reproduces a large number of works by living painters and is the only

publication in the country which does so (its other contents are relatively of minor interest), and we may justly ask that *The Listener*, to which we look for informed criticism, should entrust it for review to someone who is capable of writing about them with authority.

It is not helpful to write, for example, that "the collection as a whole can stand comparison with any similar collection from overseas." For this can only mean that the work reproduced in the *Year Book* can stand comparison with a similar collection of work by the best living French or English or Russian or American or Australian painters—let us say, to keep to the French and English, since their names are familiar, Matisse, Rouault, Braque, Derain, Picasso, Segonzac, etc., or Sir William Nicholson, Duncan Grant, Matthew Smith, Stanley Spencer, David Jones, Victor Pasmore, etc.

Are we to understand that your reviewer would seriously maintain this?  
CHARLES BRASCH (Dunedin).

(Mrs. Andrews makes this reply: "Mr. Brasch is entitled to form his own opinion of my qualifications as a reviewer of the *Arts Year Book*. He is also entitled, as his conscience permits, to read into one sentence, wrenched from its context, a meaning which I did not intend.")

Sir,—The fact that New Zealand is the best-fed country in the world does not necessarily mean (as your review suggests) that all New Zealanders are adequately fed. The disease that goes with both Maori and Pakeha shacks in the King Country exemplifies this.

Contentment arising from physical well-being is natural enough, and any lack of awareness will be surely decried by each and every aspirant in the arts. However, only the true artist is capable of placing the greater part of the blame on his fellow artists for their besetting weakness of catering for the lowest whether the medium is words, music, art, film or illustration. As in all groups the slack followers are those who produce decadence.

It cannot be disputed, though, that vital, honest, and capable work was offered in the last exhibition by McCormack, Henderson, Campbell, Taylor, Hassal, Lee Johnston, Fleming, Page, Mourant, Deans, and Miller, all of whom have more or less of the "lusty" spirit of this country. Many artists, of course, work in the other fields of linocuts or portraiture, such as Barc, Weeks, Rhind, McClelland, Clark, and Hipkins. But the work of these people, illustrated in the *Arts Year Book*, and largely represented in the exhibitions, was more often than not left unsold while the easy and comparatively poor landscapes showed the red stickers.

However, art in New Zealand has arrived; it is a fact, not something to be piously hoped for and left unsold. But it is illogical to argue against selectivity (the choice of the aristocrat) after having made the plea for more original work.

The *Year Book*, I hope, will continue the policy of the 1947 issue—to select good work, not merely to "foster" what grows in "shady corners." The explicit conviction of critical selection, a plea from J. C. Beaglehole, is what has yet to be realised.

PATRICIA S. FRY (Wellington).